



Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge

Planning Update #2

November 2000

Wildlife First

"... The fundamental mission of our refuge system is wildlife conservation: wildlife and wildlife conservation must come first."

(In House Report 105-106, the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997)

Our management activities derive from or are consistent with the "wildlife first" principle. 

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The "Blue Goose" is the symbol of the National Wildlife Refuge System.

Comprehensive Conservation Plan Public Scoping Nearly Complete

The major portion of public scoping for the Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge (Refuge) Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) has been completed. Scoping was initiated in July, 1999.

Public opinion and comments about Refuge management issues were gathered in several ways:

Meetings: We held two open public meetings in Cheney and Spokane in spring, 2000, and collected oral comments from meeting attendees (see next article). We also met privately with numerous public officials, tribes, and state and local agencies, including Senator Gorton's and Senator Murray's aides, Congressman Nethercutt, the Spokane Tribe, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, the Department of Ecology, and the Spokane County Long Range

Planning Team. We will continue to schedule meetings with community leaders and resource agencies throughout the CCP process.

Surveys: Two separate survey efforts were conducted. We sent surveys with a Planning Update to over 900 people in February; several interested civic groups distributed these surveys to their members and returned them to the Refuge. People who attended the public meetings also received a copy of this survey to fill out (see back page for a summary). During the summer of 1999, the Friends of Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge conducted an extensive visitor survey (see article on page 3). Between the two efforts, a total of 617 surveys were completed. See articles for more details on survey results.

Issues Raised at the Public Scoping Meetings

Public meetings were held on the evenings of February 29 and March 1, 2000, to examine concerns related to the development of the Refuge Plan. Approximately 100 participants attended the two meetings. Slides were shown each evening and then the meeting broke into smaller "breakout" groups, where public comments and concerns were recorded. Scoping focused on two questions:

- *What opportunities in public use would you like to see at the Refuge;*
- *Do you feel that further land and water conservation is important beyond the Refuge boundary?*

Breakout group discussions were sometimes lively and participants provided us with a diversity of issues and concerns to explore. Concerns voiced most frequently at the public scoping meetings included:

- The level of facilities/trails and opportunities for public use.
- Desire to reopen the Refuge to grazing
- The origin of water pollution on the Refuge issues; water supply issues
- Controlled hunting and elk management
- Property conflicts with adjacent land-owners and concern about condemnation

A sample of written comments that we received from the public are displayed on page 3.



Regional Recreational Needs in the Refuge Area

"...wildlife once fed us and shaped our culture. It still yields us pleasure for leisure hours, but we try to reap that pleasure by modern machinery and thus destroy part of its value. Reaping it by modern mentality would yield not only pleasure, but wisdom as well."

Aldo Leopold,
A Sand County Almanac
1949

Recently, a recreation analysis for the Refuge area was completed by EDAW, Inc., a consulting firm contracted by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. As part of the ongoing preparation of the Refuge Comprehensive Conservation Plan, the report explored the Refuge's current and future role over the next 15 years related to recreation supply and demand, and its regional context.

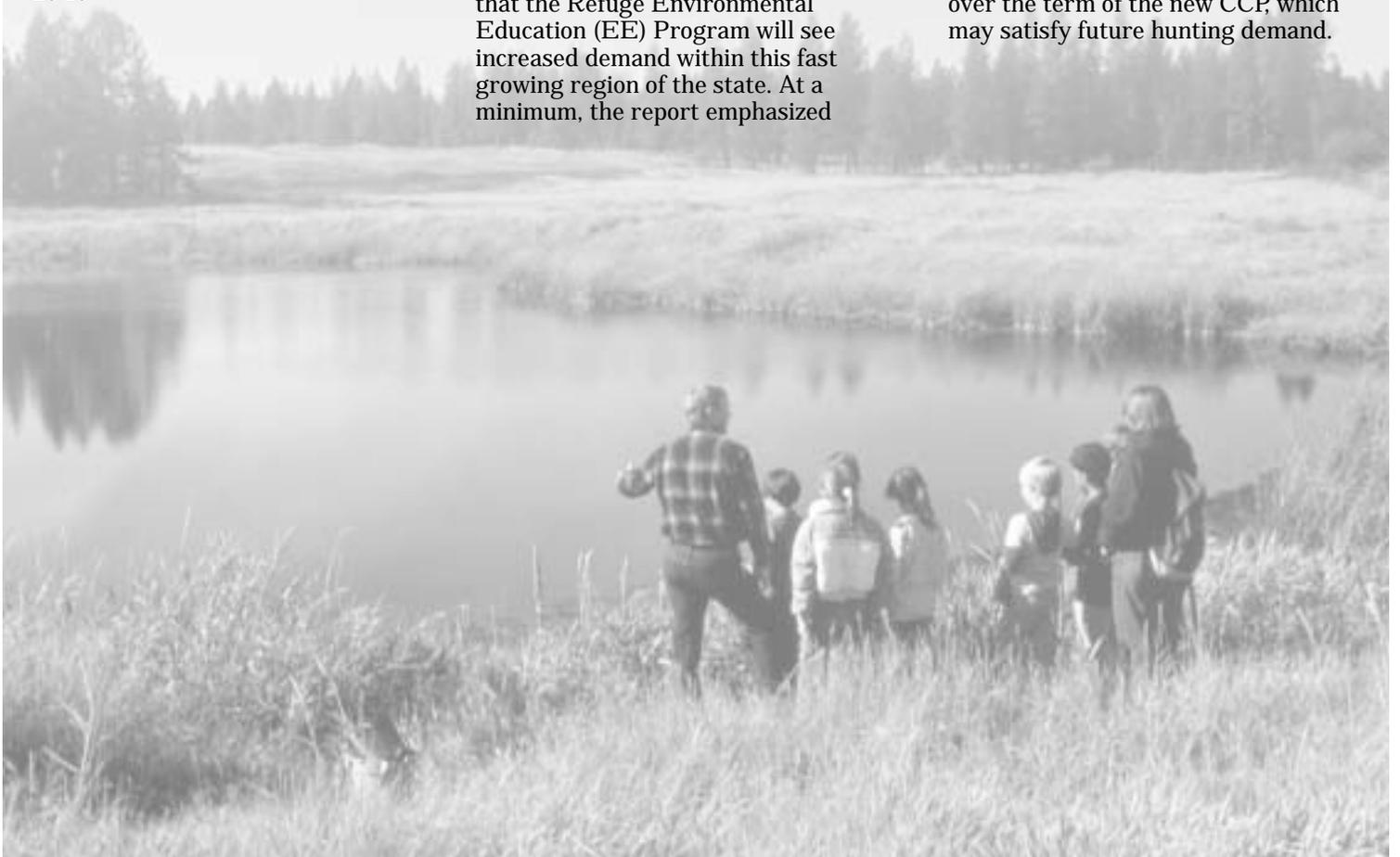
The report identified the Refuge as playing an important role in providing outdoor recreational and educational opportunities to help meet the needs of Spokane County residents and other surrounding counties of eastern Washington. An important new component of the regional demand identified for our region is the new 130-mile Columbia Plateau Trail that passes through the Refuge. This is expected to greatly increase Refuge visitation, with the trail eventually attracting as many as 500,000 visitors each year over its length.

The EDAW evaluation noted that the Refuge will continue to attract many school groups annually. It is expected that the Refuge Environmental Education (EE) Program will see increased demand within this fast growing region of the state. At a minimum, the report emphasized

a need for adequate staffing to accommodate current demands. An expansion of the existing EE Program may be considered in the current CCP to meet increasing demands.

Because the need for non-school recreational use (e.g., hiking, bicycling, sightseeing, wildlife observation) will also be increasing with urban growth, the report concluded that the Refuge CCP should consider expanded opportunities for the general public in the Public Use Area, particularly the auto tour route area, compatible with wildlife resources.

Finally, the report evaluated hunting in the region. Future regional demand for hunting is expected to remain fairly stable or decrease slightly in coming years. The Spokane County area appears to provide an adequate amount of hunting at this time. However, as the overall county and the Cheney area continue to grow in population, some existing private hunting areas will be lost to development. The report recommended that the Refuge consider hunting as a wildlife management tool over the term of the new CCP, which may satisfy future hunting demand.



Visitors at Winslow Pool

A Sample of Your Written Comments

- I would be horrified if the Refuge allowed hunting.
- Why is the refuge paid for with hunting license money and there is no hunting allowed?
- I believe that permit hunting to control elk and deer populations would be justified.
- I am distressed to see tree trunks that have been blackened and branches burnt in your controlled burns.
- Make what we have useable for all.
- Look forward 25 years.
- Don't even think about returning cattle grazing to the Refuge.
- I think some of the Refuge should allow for small amounts of cattle grazing.
- Do not want any buffer zone around the Refuge.
- Stop worrying about too much publicity. There is no such thing. You need public exposure.

Friends of Turnbull 1999 Public Use Survey - Results

In 1999, the Friends of Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge (Friends) and Refuge staff conducted a visitor survey to identify visitor use patterns, preferences, and needs related to the Refuge. Below is a summary of the visitor survey results.

531 visitor surveys were administered at nine different locations ranging from the Spokane Interstate Fair in Spokane, Washington to grocery stores near the Refuge.

- Almost three out of five (59%) individuals surveyed had visited the Refuge at least once.
- About a quarter of the respondents (n= 128) said that they visited the Refuge an average of 3.5 visits/year.
- A smaller amount of respondents answered how they had first heard about the Refuge (n= 111). Almost half (47%) heard about the Refuge from



friends, while family members (22%) and school (15%) were other important sources of information.

- Most (95%) of the individuals surveyed were from Spokane County, Washington.
- Among the individuals who had previously visited the Refuge (n= 315), the most popular activities listed were enjoying nature (64%), watching birds (51%), and hiking (45%).
- Some respondents (n= 105) answered a question concerning what appealed to them the most about the Refuge. The most common responses were wildlife (55%), that the Refuge is close to their home (15%), and the solitude that can be found there (15%).
- After learning that hunting is currently not allowed on the Refuge, over four out of five (82%) respondents agreed that the Refuge should remain closed to hunting (n= 485). Of the 88 respondents who felt that the Refuge should be opened to hunting, about half (51%) felt that all types of hunting should be allowed, while 21% felt that only big game hunting should be allowed.
- Some respondents were asked if they would attend evening or weekend programs at the Refuge if they were offered (n= 212). Half (50%) said they would attend such a program, over a third (36%) did not know if they would, and 14% said they would not attend.

■ All respondents were asked to identify if there were any changes they would like to see at the Refuge. Of the 108 who answered the question, about



Those Leaves

Somewhere a forest,
every leaf still,
far but clear.

Somewhere staggering pines
making it over a pass.

And somewhere a wind
ready to find far, lost men
and cover their tracks.

We walk on.

Leaves blow past.



William Stafford
Smoke's Way
1983

a third (32%) would like more trails, 14% would like more interpretive signs, 12% would like more staff interpretation (staffed booth, guided hikes, interpretive talks), and 9% would like more facilities for the disabled, such as paved paths for wheelchairs.

■ Twenty visitors were contacted at the Refuge and were asked if the Refuge was their final destination. Three out of four (75%) respondents indicated that it was their final destination.

*Above: Canada goose with gosling
Left: Ruddy duck male*

Results of the Public Scoping Survey in the year 2000

The survey's purpose was to gather public opinion information for use in the CCP preparation.

The survey, comprised of 7 questions, queried participants about their experiences on the Refuge and solicited opinions on several management and planning issues. A total of 86 participants completed the survey. Not every respondent answered each question, so some results are based on less than 86 responses. The following is a summary of participant responses:

■ **Wildlife and Nature**

More than half (55%) of all respondents felt that "wildlife" makes the Refuge special to them, while 26% felt "nature" makes it special. These two reasons together indicate that natural, non-facility dependent factors make the Refuge special to a large majority of respondents. Other important reasons included interpretation/education (11%), the Refuge's proximity to home (9%), and visiting as part of a family tradition (6%).

■ **Hunting**

29% identified the prohibition of hunting as an important Refuge issue. However, nearly 13% felt that the most important issue was allowing hunting as a management tool. This indicates the difference in public opinion on this important issue. Other issues included increasing interpretation/education opportunities (17%) and stopping urban expansion (14%).

■ **Facilities**

93% felt that public facilities met their needs. Suggested changes included adding hiking/biking trails (9%) and interpretive facilities/services (9%), opening more areas to public use (8%), and providing more or better restroom facilities (5%).

■ **Expansion**

Two-thirds (65.7%) supported Refuge expansion as a wildlife and habitat management tool.

■ **Activities**

Nearly two-thirds (65%) visited the Refuge primarily to watch birds. Other activities mentioned included hiking (40%), photography (29%), and environmental education (26%).

For more details, contact the Refuge at 509/235 4723.

What's Next?

You will have several more opportunities to provide input. In upcoming months, we will:

- *Evaluate public comments, and further define CCP issues.*
- *Develop objectives, alternatives, and alternative strategies.*
- *Submit draft alternatives to public for review/comment.*
- *Modify alternatives based on public comment.*
- *Submit Draft CCP/Environmental Assessment to public for review and comment for a period of 45 days.*
- *Make final changes to documents based on public input.*
- *Complete Final CCP/Environmental Assessment.*

Cover photo: White-tail deer

Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge
26010 South Smith Road
Cheney, WA 99004
509/235 4723

email: FW1TurnbulINWR@fws.gov